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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2982
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0536

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001269

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/04/2018
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL SOCI UZ
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: IMPRISONED ACTIVIST REPORTEDLY
ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

REF: A. TASHKENT 1200
1B. TASHKENT 1258

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: On November 3, the Deputy Chairman of the Ezgulik human rights group confirmed internet reports of the alleged suicide attempt by imprisoned Ezgulik member Abdurasul Khudoynazarov. According to the Deputy Chairman, Khudoynazarov attempted suicide after enduring frequent mistreatment at the hands of prison guards. Separately, the Human Rights Alliance reported that the health of imprisoned activist Norboy Kholjigitov was worsening, while Human Rights Watch finally confirmed the amnesty and release of Ezgulik member Mamarajab Nazarov on October 17 (ref A). While we applaud Nazarov's release, we are still concerned about the reported mistreatment of political prisoners who remain behind bars, including Khudoynazarov and Kholjigitov, and we will continue to advocate strongly on their behalf as well as for expanded International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to detention facilities. End summary.

ACTIVIST REPORTEDLY ATTEMPTS SUICIDE AFTER MISTREATMENT

12. (C) On November 3, Ezgulik human rights group Deputy Chairman Abdurakhmon Tashanov reported to poloff that Ezgulik member Abdurasul Khudoynazarov, who was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment in June 2005 on politically motivated charges of blackmail and fraud, recently attempted suicide at the 64/1 prison in the town of Angren in Tashkent province. According to Tashanov, Khudoynazarov attempted to hang himself with a t-shirt, but was rescued by prison guards. Khudoynazarov was reportedly driven to attempt suicide by the same guards, who allegedly beat and humiliated him on a regular basis. Prior to the suicide attempt, Khudoynazarov reportedly attempted to complain about his treatment in a letter to a local prosecutor, but was subsequently punished by being placed in solitary confinement. He then allegedly conducted a hunger strike from June 12 until June 28, but was punished by being placed in solitary confinement again for

another 15 days. Despite the reported suicide attempt, Tashanov reported that Khudoynazarov was currently in good health.

¶3. (C) Tashanov reported being told about the suicide attempt by Khudoynazarov's wife, who last saw her husband in prison on September 23. Tashanov said that Khudoynazarov's wife still has the t-shirt which Khudoynazarov reportedly used to try to hang himself. Tashanov also reported that a letter from Khudoynazarov, detailing his mistreatment, had been earlier smuggled out of prison and delivered to Ezgulik.

He added that Ezgulik has sent complaint letters about Khudoynazarov's mistreatment to the General Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Interior's Prison Directorate, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

¶4. (C) Khudoynazarov was on a list of political prisoners that the Embassy presented to the Uzbek government earlier this year. He also was included on a list of political prisoners the EU delivered to the government.

PRESS REACTION OVER KHUDOYNAZAROV'S ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

¶5. (SBU) Tashanov also was quoted about the case in an October 24 Voice of Freedom article. We also believe that this article formed the basis of an October 31 appeal on Khudoynazarov's behalf by the Front Line international human rights group.

HEALTH OF IMPRISONED ACTIVIST REPORTEDLY WORSENING

¶6. (U) In a November 3 internet press release, Human Rights Alliance member Elena Urlayeva reported that the health of Norboy Kholjigitov, who was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on politically motivated charges in November 2005, was deteriorating in prison. According to Urlayeva, the last time Kholjigitov's son visited his father in prison, he found that his father appeared very sick and suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure. Kholjigitov is currently being held at prison 64/49 in the city of Qarshi in Kashkadarya province, where he has been reportedly mistreated by prison authorities.

¶7. (U) Urlayeva further reported that prison authorities recently accused Kholjigitov of violating internal prison regulations in order to make him ineligible for the latest amnesty (Note: This is a common tactic used against political prisoners. End note.) Kholjigitov was also on the lists of political prisoners submitted to the Uzbek government by post and the European Union.

HRW CONFIRMS NAZAROV RELEASE

¶8. (SBU) In an email to poloff on November 3, former Human Rights Watch Tashkent office director Igor Vorontsov confirmed that Ezgulik member Mamarajab Nazarov had been amnestied and released from prison on October 17 (ref A). Nazarov reportedly had no complaints about mistreatment during his last year in prison and even participated in artistic competitions for inmates organized by the prison administration.

¶9. (SBU) Following his release, Nazarov allegedly was warned by authorities to stay away from any "subversive contacts" and is now afraid that his relatives might be punished if he has any contact with human rights groups or international organization. Upon his release, the local police station in the Khushrabad district of Samarkand province reportedly made him sign a document that he would not leave his home without prior approval from the police. Since his release, he reportedly has been granted permission three times to visit relatives and the local hokimiyyat (regional government administration building).

COMMENT

110. (C) Without access to Uzbekistan's prisons, it is impossible for us to fully confirm reports about Khudoynazarov and Kholjigitov. We will continue to follow these cases closely and report any updates. The reported mistreatment of Khudoynazarov and release of Nazarov, both members of Ezgulik, illustrates well the government's recent mixed record in regards to political prisoners. While we applaud Nazarov's release (if not the subsequent limitations on his activities), we are still concerned about the reported mistreatment of individuals who remain behind bars, including Khudoynazarov and Kholjigitov. The government has shown itself willing to prosecute some prison and law enforcement officials accused of abusing detainees (ref B), but clearly more is needed. It will be essential to continue and expand the ICRC's access to detention facilities in order to curtail abuse. We continue to press the government on this.

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